Plymouth
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

WHAT IF, YES? (¿Y si sí?)

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Text: A sermon related to Isaiah 65:17-25

Coming into the 2026 FIFA World Cup tournament, fans of the Mexican national team had every reason to be pessimistic. Mexico had never won a FIFA World Cup, or even come close. It's been 40 long years since they even made it to the quarterfinals. In the last World Cup? They never made it past the first round. There is talk of a curse hanging over the team, the Curse of the Fifth Game.

Yet, despite all the reasons for despair or apathy, an audaciously hopeful phrase began popping up across the country— ¿Y si sí? There's no perfect translation in English, but the spirit of it is simple- What if...yes? What if it actually happens?

Y si sí?

It started as a whisper. A few fans daring to imagine.

Then it became a roar.

Suddenly, you couldn't escape the sound of it. 'Y si sí?' was everywhere. It blew up across TikTok and Instagram. It was in television ads. It was plastered on highway billboards. Players themselves took selfies with the slogan etched on their clothing.

A whole country, bound together by a single phrase, daring to imagine the impossible.

The team played an immaculate first round. Four games. Zero goals allowed. The Curse of the Fifth Game defeated. ...Despite finally falling to England, the spirit of 'Y si sí? didn't die on that soccer field. It has come to mean more than the possibility of a soccer trophy. It became a joyful defiant shout against impossible odds in a country facing its own seemingly impossible odds—cartel violence, a struggling economy, political disillusionment.

'Y si sí?—What if, yes?—became the language of collective imagination, daring an entire country to envision a better tomorrow.

And twenty-five hundred years ago, the prophet Isaiah was preaching the very same language to a dejected Jerusalem.

When this section of Isaiah was written—what scholars call Third Isaiah—God's people had finally returned from exile. But it was far from a triumphant homecoming. The city lay in neglect. The temple was in ruins. The economy was crushed. Courts were corrupt, factions were fighting, and leaders were serving only themselves.

It felt nothing like the glorious future promised just a generation earlier—a promise of peace and prosperity. And so, Third Isaiah wrestles with one burning question:
What happened to the promise?

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Please note: *This is an unedited preaching script.*

Isaiah's answer is complex. Before the text of today's passage, the prophet has given full voice to raw, unvarnished lament—crying out over God's seeming absence. Isaiah calls for deep repentance, demanding an end to the corruption and selfishness tearing the community apart.

Then … we arrive at today's passage.

And it sounds like nothing we've heard so far.

Here, there are no tired and empty words of comfort. No explanation of why things got this bad. No instructions for what to do next. It isn't practical. It isn't cautious. It isn't bound by the limits of our lived experience.

It is pure, holy, radical imagination.

It is God whispering into our exhaustion and despair, into the mess we have made:

"Y si sí?"

Imagine, God tells us, a world of connection instead of competition.

A world where all children flourish, and elders live with dignity.

Where our labor is justly rewarded, and everyone has the sanctuary of home.

Where no creature is harmed and no creature harms.

Where we have forgotten what weeping even sounds like.

What if… yes?

Imagination isn't just fantasy—it is the force that creates reality. Almost every facet of our lives was born first in human imagination, for good or ill. We imagined laws, art, medicine, and technology. We imagined borders and money and race.

Writer and activist adrienne maree brown [sic] tells us that right now, we are locked in an imagination battle.

Because for generations, we have been living inside constructs built by others' imagination. We've been handed the lie that some people are more human than others. That some deserve abundance while others deserve bare survival. We've been told there isn't enough to go around, so we must fight each other over the scraps. None of this is objectively true, it's just imaginings we've inherited.

We have been immersed in hierarchy and scarcity our whole lives, and our capacity to envision anything else has been stunted. Moreover, our imagination is taxed by the grinding stress of everyday life—the burdens of affording basic necessities, the relentless exposure to mass suffering through today's media, the screens holding our attention hostage. We are left too depleted to dream. Our capacity to envision a better world atrophies.

The cost of letting our imagination decay is high. We see it all around us. It feels like hopelessness and apathy. It sounds like giving up our power, inadvertently propping up the very systems that were never built for us to thrive, that benefit a few and exploit the rest. It looks like problems that seem to have no solutions and believing the lie that nothing can ever change. And so it doesn't. As scholar and activist bell hooks [sic] wrote, "What we can't imagine, can't come to be."

So how do we cultivate our radical imaginations?

It's something we have to practice together. And faith communities are uniquely equipped for this work. We declare belief in the mystical. We hold space for the impossible. We have prophets like Isaiah who

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paint us visions of worlds we've never seen. We follow Jesus who taught us that the kingdom of God turns the ways of this world upside-down. We have rituals that embody radical realities—our common unity at the table of communion, our innate belonging in the waters of baptism. We gather every week to remind ourselves and each other that we are unconditionally and equally beloved.

We, the Church, are not here to merely uphold traditions of the past. We are called to be an imagination engine of a transformed future.

So how does an engine like that actually run?

It doesn't start by remaking the whole world overnight.

It starts in the micro.

In her work on Emergent Strategy, adrienne maree brown reminds us: Small is all.

What we practice at the micro scale builds the macro reality. The large is made of the small. We can grow a different future through relatively simple interactions.

Exploring Emergent Strategy made me think of something Plymouth member Katie Dillon shared with me. Katie lives quite close to where George Floyd was murdered. In the weeks that followed, members of the community began meeting every morning and evening, to share information, resources, and care. Over time, the morning gathering took on a life of its own. And today—more than six years later—it is still happening.

Every single morning at 8:00 AM, neighbors gather. Someone brings hot coffee. There are always introductions, as people come and go. They ground themselves in five shared principles that protect the safety and dignity of everyone present. They check in on each other—did someone have a hard day? Did someone's food stamps get cut? Does someone have something to celebrate? They share perspectives and information on what is happening in the neighborhood.

There are no barriers to membership. No hierarchy. Katie told me that the relationships that have developed through that daily gathering have led to a greater sense of belonging and interdependence. Neighbors know each other's names. They share lawnmowers and shovel each other's sidewalks. That gathering has become a sacred container—a space strong enough to hold whatever grief, rage, or joy comes through the circle.

That is emergent strategy embodied. That is the power of shaping a new reality with the collective imagination of what could be.

These neighbors didn't know each other before. It was easy to share proximity without knowing each other's names or building relationships. Our society says we don't need to. Our society tells us we are isolated individuals, that trusting your neighbor is risky and sharing resources makes us vulnerable. Katie's morning meeting exposes the lie. It asks:
Y si sí? What if, yes?

What if this community is our container for practicing the micro-habits that shape a different future for us and our world?

What if we create more space in our lives to dream, to explore our longings, to listen to our hearts?

What if we invite more, different people to dream with us, so that our dreams expand to include their longings too?

What if we prioritize art, play, nature, and celebration as sparks for our imagination?

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What if we seek out more stories like Katie's—models of emergence, where ordinary people take small, doable steps that mold new realities?

What if we tell the stories of our faith not as relics of a distant past, but as the raw fuel for our moral imaginations?

Y si sí?

The holy mountain Isaiah spoke of does not have to be a distant fantasy. It can be the vision that fuels us with hope. It can begin here on a street corner with neighbors sharing coffee and care. Here at the communion table this World Communion Sunday, where we recognize our shared identity across the globe as children of God. Here where strangers train to protect each other's safety and right to vote. Here where caregivers and grievers gather to support each other and here where we have entire rooms dedicated to art and theater and music and prayer. Here where food is made accessible and children are included and a garden is nurtured for all to enjoy.

And friends, we can imagine so much more, together.

So when you find yourself drawn in by that voice that says,

"Nothing will ever change.

Everything is too broken. There's nothing I can do."

When you hear it whisper your worst fears: "The problems are too big. The forces of evil too strong. Your own brokenness too limiting."

Plymouth, disprove the lies.

Stoke your imagination.

Find someone to dream with.

Remember that small new habits shape a new future.

When despair whispers that what we know is all that can ever be, return to Isaiah's vision.

Return to the voice of God saying, "I am about to create new heavens and a new earth."

And answer back, "Y si sí? What if...yes?"

Friends, go out into the world today ready to use your imagination.

Seek out inspiration and make space to dream, for our future depends on it.

And as you go, trust that the God of Isaiah is already at work,

Already crafting a new heaven and a new earth where weeping is no more.

Y si, si? What if, yes?

Amen!

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